

MADAGASCAR PRATINCOLES *GLAREOLA OCULARIS* AND OTHER PRATINCOLES IN SOMALIA.

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Britton's (1977) review of the status of the Madagascar Pratincole *Glareola ocularis* in Africa showed that the pattern of its migrations and breeding cycle are now well understood, and that a part of the Kenya coast is an important area for non-breeding birds in April–August. He also gave two dated non-breeding records for Somalia, from which he deduced that there might be an "off-season area" in that country. Some personal observations are presented to show that he was correct in this supposition, and we also quote some other earlier records.

OBSERVATIONS

Except for two records, most of the earlier Madagascar Pratincoles prior to 1979 in Somalia, for which there are nine references in the literature in the period 1923–1971, refer to collected birds (Table 1). Unfortunately there is little information on the actual numbers present at the time of collection, so mostly it is impossible to know whether they are merely isolated records of single birds, or whether they were collected from flocks. The only record of large numbers in this period is the 500 recorded on the Jubba River by Moltoni (1936b). In 1979, large numbers of *G. ocularis* were seen in Somalia, when a flock of 3000 was counted on 25 and 28 May near Jiohar on the Webi Shabelle. We found these birds in mid-afternoon resting on patches of exposed mud in a large area of flooded land. The diagnostic characters of identification were clearly seen in close views, and no Common Pratincoles *G. pratincola* could be seen with them. Three observers separately estimated their numbers, by counting birds in one batch of 100 and then applying this to the whole flock. Our individual totals were 2700, 3000 and 3500. When followed by a more thorough count our final figure of 3000 was arrived at.

OFF-SEASON RANGE

Except for the undated 1929 record (Moltoni 1935, 1936a), all the other records fall between 25 May (in two years) and 4 September (Table 1), while extreme dates cited by Britton for Kenya are 4 April and 30 September. Earlier dates in spring and later dates in autumn are to be expected in Kenya, so that the respective differences of 51 and 26 days may suggest a rather leisurely movement between the Jubba and Shebelle areas and the Kenya coast. The single record from Ethiopia on 29 October (Ash 1977), falls well outside the above off-season dates, at a time of the year when *G. ocularis* should be breeding in Madagascar. Perhaps it can be explained as a displaced bird following a 'reverse migration', for it was in exactly the opposite direction to which it should have been in relation to the off-season area in Somalia. Smaller numbers of birds were seen in 1980, but no special searches were made, and all observations resulted from chance finds in the large area in which the birds occurred. However, up to 3000 birds were seen again in the mid-Shabelle valley in 1981.

Table 1. *Records of Glareola ocularis in Somalia*

Locality	Co-ordinates	Dates	N	Authority
Gumbo (Jumba)	0°15S, 42°38E	1923	?	Moltoni 1936a
Mogadishu area	2°02N, 45°21E	1929	1	Moltoni 1935, 1936a
Belet Amin (Beled Amiin)	0°12N, 42°47E	Jun 1934	500+	Moltoni 1936a, 1936b
Belet Amin	0°12N, 42°47E	30 Jun 1934	1	Moltoni 1936b
Torda	0°05S, 42°44E	Jul 1934	1	Moltoni 1936a, 1936b
Jiohar (Jowhar)	2°47N, 45°30E	25 May 1939	1	Moltoni 1941
Jiohar	2°47N, 45°30E	3 Jun 1939	1	Moltoni 1941
Kurtonware (Kurtunwaarey)	1°37N, 44°20E	14 Aug 1959	1	Berlioz & Roche 1963
Giamama (Jamaame)	0°04N, 42°45E	4 Sep 1964	1	Roche 1975
Goluen (Golweyn)	1°40N, 44°35E	24 Aug 1971	?	R.G. Allan (pers. comm.)
9 km S of Jiohar	2°42N, 45°27E	25 May 1979	3000	JSA, JEM
9 km S of Jiohar	2°42N, 45°27E	28 May 1979	3000	JSA, JEM
16 km N of Afgoi	2°17N, 45°05E	19 Jun 1979	4	JSA, JEM
14 km S of Afgoi	2°04N, 45°14E	1 Jul 1979	400	JSA, JEM
20 km S of Uanle Uen	2°28N, 44°59E	3 Jul 1979	2	JSA
Uarmahan (War Maxan)	2°24N, 45°01E	4 Jul 1979	1	JSA
Uarmahan (War Maxan)	2°24N, 45°01E	5 Jul 1979	25	JSA
30 km S of Uanle Uen	2°23N, 45°01E	26 Jun 1980	10	JSA
Uarmahan to near Mogadishu		7 Jul–4 Aug 1980	10+	JSA
Shalambot/Dannow area	1°42N, 44°42S–			
	1°44N, 44°37E	13 Aug 1980	20+	JSA
Near Uarmahan	2°24N, 45°01E	6 Jul 1981	20+	JSA
Near Uarmahan	2°24N, 45°01E	7 Jul 1981	3000	JSA
Kurtonware	1°37N, 44°20E	20–22 Jul 1981	100s	JSA
Kurtonware	1°37N, 44°20E	3 Aug 1981	many	JSA

Clearly southern Somalia is an important off-season area for this species. Probably the majority of birds spend most of the non-breeding season in Somalia, and it is very likely these birds which, whilst on southward passage, augment the Kenya coast population in August and September. At this time, from mid-August onwards, numbers on the Kenyan coast increase from c. 800 to up to 9000 (Britton 1977, 1980). From May to August huge areas of favourable habitat exist in Somalia along the Jubba and Shabelle valleys. Both areas are poorly known ornithologically and in particular a large area along the lower Shabelle is virtually inaccessible and has never been other than casually explored for birds. From July onwards, after the cessation of the big rains (the *gu* season), the marshes and flood plains dry up rapidly, and would become increasingly unfavourable for *G. ocularis*.

As in Kenya, *G. pratincola* also occurs in Somalia in the same general area as *ocularis*, except that it is in smaller numbers and *pratincola* alone occurs in the north-west (Archer

& Godman 1937, Clarke 1984). Although present in most months, and breeding in June and July, their dates of occurrence also can coincide with those of *ocularis*, so that all pratincole identifications need to be checked carefully. The records of *pratincola* in southern Somalia from Kismayu (0°22S, 42°32E) in July 1901, recorded in Hilgert (1908), Moltoni (1936a) and Neumann (1920), presumably all refer to Erlanger's (1904–1907) records. To these we can add 26 records of our own of up to 100 birds over a wide area south of 3°N between 2 April 1979 and 9 December 1981 (*vide* the 'Checklist'—Ash & Miskell 1983). From the north-west, the original two September records by Archer & Godman (1937), have been increased by three more by Clarke (1984) in August and September in 1956 and 1958.

Two records of single Black-winged Pratincoles *G. nordmanni* from Hargeisa (9°33N, 44°04E) and Tug Wajaleh (9°37N, 43°17E) in September 1920 (Archer & Godman 1937) are the only records for this species in Somalia.

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CORRECTIONS

In the paper 'On the breeding behaviour of three montane sunbirds *Nectarinia* spp. in northern Malawi' by Dr Françoise Dowsett-Lemaire (*Scopus* 11: 79–86), a number of mistakes were made in the typesetting and editorial stages, for which I apologize. The corrections are as follows:

p. 82, line 10: replace 'with' by 'without'

p. 83, after line 3 a whole paragraph has been omitted:

Bronze Sunbirds have loud calls *pe puua*, *pe piu* (Fig. 2) that are used in territorial advertisement. Song consists of a musical and fast warble, heard only at short range, uttered when males chase and display near females, and also between females in territorial disputes. I saw up to three females singing together in an upright posture after unsuccessful chasing.

p. 84, line 7: replace 'alteration' by 'alternation'

p. 84, Discussion, third paragraph.: *N. afra* raises 'two or three' broods, not 'single' broods.